



# Homeland Security

## Arizona Interagency Radio System (AIRS) Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) Assessment

OEC ICTAP Technical Assistance Request #WO09-086

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April 28, 2009



# Homeland Security

## Assessment Outline

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- Overview
- SOP Content
  - Introductory material
    - Policy
    - Purpose
    - Administration
    - Region Assignments
    - Frequency Information
  - Operational Guidelines
    - Rules of Use
    - Prioritization
    - Restrictions, limitations, and problem solving
    - Dispatcher actions
    - Field user actions
- Question and Answer



## SOP Status Assessment

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## Overview

- PSIC submitted in excess of 60 identified documents that in some fashion informed or addressed the development of AIRS and its predecessors (AERS and IARS)
  - Reviewers noted seven current and valid documents located at [http://www.azgita.gov/pscc/technical\\_standards.htm](http://www.azgita.gov/pscc/technical_standards.htm)
  - Reviewers received an additional six current and valid documents via email
  - Three additional documents, including the 2004 MACRO report, were identified as older but still containing potentially valid information
  - Remaining documents were either blank, replaced by newer revisions, or significantly out of date.

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## Current Valid Documents

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- AIRS subscriber programming guide (2007)
- Minimum standards for VHF subscriber radios (2007)
- Minimum standards for UHF subscriber radios (2007)
- AIRS State Plan (2007)
- AIRS Regional Channel Assignments (2007)
- AIRS Regional Coverage
  - AIRS Coverage Map (2008)
- Regional VHF Tactical Channel Assignments (2007)
- AIRS MOU with DPS
- AIRS Current Participating Agencies
- Federal Engineering Needs Report (2007)
- Federal Engineering Current Radio Systems Report (2007)
- RCC AERS Report (2006)
- MACRO Statewide Radio Interoperability Needs Report (2004)

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## Identified Content

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- Document library currently contains information that could inform SOPs of various complexity
  - User Guide
    - User oriented
    - Concise and to the point
    - Contains limited technical or governance detail; focused on “how”
    - Could be further condensed into a “pocket” guide for field use
  - Full Standards, Policies, Agreements, & Procedures
    - Management oriented
    - Detailed and specific
    - Contains significant technical, policy, and governance details: focused on the “what,” “who,” and “why”
- Significant amount of material for the full standard...less material currently written for a user guide

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## Introductory Material

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- Good material
  - Solid policy statement
  - Solid purpose statement
  - Good administration (governed by the SIEC)
- Noted gaps
  - Need to determine the document tone
    - Requirements?
    - Suggestions?
    - Guidelines?
  - Need to set an update/review/revision schedule
    - How often?
    - Inputs received how?
    - Done by whom?

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## Regional Assignments

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- Good material
  - Defined regional channel assignments for AIRS1-5
  - Easily understood mapping
- Noted gaps
  - Possibly problematic programming convention (i.e. AIRSAZ is in channel position 1 so AIRS1 is in channel position 2, etc.)
  - Coverage maps are for UHF only
    - Do not contain a legend
    - Do not provide a valid approximation for VHF or 800MHz coverage
    - Do not identify areas of potential interference
    - Do not identify if they address mobile or portable coverage
  - More 800MHz channels (17) than allowable in a single standard Motorola bank (16)
    - Which channel is omitted? Standardized or at the discretion of each agency?
  - Currently includes federal UTAC and VTAC channel assignments that do not require signing the AIRS MOU
    - Keep this information together or separate it out from the AIRS SOP?

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## Operational Guidelines

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- Good material
  - Some communication center, command, and user responsibilities
- Noted gaps
  - Included responsibilities are too vague to be actionable
  - Rules of Use should match rules for other interoperable communications assets in the state (use language from TIC Plan?)
  - Prioritization is **KEY** with a system as limited as AIRS...suggest also using language from the TIC Plan
  - Restrictions and limitations of the system are not defined in terms of impact to the user and mitigation strategies
  - Consider matching problem ID/resolution language to the TIC Plan and ensuring that the SIEC is advised of any/all issues.

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## Operational Guidelines cont.

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- Noted gaps cont.
  - No documentation of any user training or available user training materials
  - No documentation of the use of AIRS in exercise opportunities or planned events
  - No documentation describing the various current uses (or non-uses) of AIRS across the state
    - Likely being used in several different ways; standardization could be both valuable and difficult to achieve
    - Consider documenting current local, county, or regional procedures and looking for commonalities

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## SOP Section Considerations

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## SOP Introductory material

- Policy statement
  - This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) defines how to use the statewide interoperability system known as the Arizona Interagency Radio System (AIRS).
- Purpose statement
  - AIRS is designed to provide interoperable communications capability to first responders of police, fire, and EMS agencies, as well as other personnel of municipal, county, state, tribal, federal agencies and approved non-governmental organizations (NGO's) performing public safety activities. This system operates on designated interoperability frequencies.
  - These radio frequencies are to be used in the event of a multi-jurisdictional operation requiring the use of the common state radio channel(s), specifically for the use of coordinating activities during identified incidents. AIRS frequencies are not to be used by a single agency for routine public safety operations.

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## Introductory material cont.

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- Administration
  - The Arizona Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee (SIEC) shall serve as the AIRS governing entity.
- Document terminology
  - The terms “shall”, “must” and “required” are used throughout this document to indicate required parameters and to differentiate from recommended parameters. Recommendations are identified by the words “desirably” or “preferably”.
- Updates and revisions
  - The SIEC will review this SOP annually, or as additional needs arise.

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## Operational Guidelines

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- Rules of Use
  - AIRS channels are reserved for situations that require interoperable communications to coordinate multiple public safety entities and/or activities across two or more separate radio systems. The following rules of use apply to these channels:
    - **National Incident Management System** – Use an Incident Command System (ICS) compliant with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) when using any regional interoperability resource.
    - **Plain Language** – All interoperable communications during multi-agency, multi-discipline incidents will be in plain language. Avoid using radio codes, acronyms, and abbreviations as they may cause confusion between agencies. Ensure that all verbal requests for assistance or backup specify the reason for the request.
    - **Unit Identification** – Announce your home agency prior to announcing your unit identifier during interoperable communication situations. (i.e., [Local Example Here])

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## Operational Guidelines cont.

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- Prioritization
  - In response to events or incidents which cross over political jurisdictions, there will potentially be competing demands and priorities for interoperable communications assets.
  - Until such time as Incident Command is established, the lead agency designee (i.e., communications supervisor/command personnel), in cooperation with their counterparts in other assisting agencies, will have the authority to designate the use of interoperable assets, including AIRS channels. Once Incident Command has been established, Command Staff or Communication Unit Leaders (when designated) direct the further coordination and delegation of the interoperable communications assets assigned to the event or incident in question.
  - Agencies should judiciously activate needed interoperable assets so as to both effectively respond to the event or incident as well as to minimize any negative impact on surrounding agencies or jurisdictions.

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## Operational Guidelines cont.

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- Prioritization cont.
  - When the same resources are requested for two or more incidents, AIRS assignments should be based on the priority levels listed below:
    - Disasters, large scale incidents, or extreme emergencies requiring mutual aid or interagency communications.
    - Incidents where imminent danger exists to life or property.
    - Incidents requiring the response of multiple agencies.
    - Pre-planned events requiring mutual aid or interagency communications.
    - Incidents involving a single agency where supplemental communications are needed for agency use.
    - Drills, tests and exercises.

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## Operational Guidelines cont.

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- Prioritization cont.
  - In the event of multiple simultaneous incidents within the same priority level, AIRS channels should be allocated with the following priorities in mind:
    - Incidents with the greatest level of exigency (e.g., greater threat to life or property, more immediate need, etc.) have priority over less exigent incidents.
    - Agencies with single/limited interoperable options have priority use of those options over agencies with multiple interoperable options.
    - When at all possible, agencies already using an interoperable asset during an event should not be redirected to another resource.

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## Operational Guidelines cont.

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- Restrictions & Limitations
  - Known issues:
    - Interference
    - Coverage
    - Multiple simultaneous events
    - Non-voted tower assignments
    - Moving events that cross tower coverage areas or regional assignment lines

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## Operational Guidelines cont.

- Dispatcher Actions
  - Current content is vague
    - “Continuously monitor AIRS channel” and “Monitor and respond on AIRS channel(s)”
      - Which channel(s)? Only the regional channel? AIRSAZ? All AIRS channels?
      - Monitor for what?
      - Respond to whom? All transmissions on AIRS at every dispatch center that hears the transmission? Only the transmissions from your agency’s responders?
      - Respond how? If the responder is not from your agency, what should you do with their information?

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## Operational Guidelines cont.

- Dispatcher Actions
  - Need to develop actionable, concise procedures
    - Who monitors what channels when? At what priority level? If no one, what does that decision mean to the user?
    - Who is responsible for an incident on a given channel?
    - How do dispatchers handle that incident (both if and if not involving their agency)?
    - How and how often are staff trained in AIRS?
    - How and how often is testing conducted?
    - What precisely should dispatchers do if one or more AIRS channels fail?

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## Operational Guidelines cont.

- Field User Actions
  - All existing action statements are included under prioritization and general rules of use
  - Need to develop actionable, concise procedures
    - Which responders can use which channels when? How? For what reasons?
    - Who is responsible for an incident on a given channel?
    - What are the limitations of that system to a user? How can they work around/within those limitations?
    - When should AIRS NOT be used?
    - How and how often are staff trained in AIRS?
    - How and how often is testing conducted?
    - What precisely should field users do if one or more AIRS channels fail?
  - Need to consider standardization...how is AIRS currently used in various regions? If used in the same way, standardize the procedures. If used differently, why? Include multiple procedures?

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## Operational Guidelines cont.

- Problem ID and Resolution
  - During an incident:
    - Report AIRS problems to the primary agency dispatcher who will follow established agency procedures to resolve the problem.
  - Following an incident, the following general problem ID and resolution processes apply to all AIRS Channels:
    - Report any problems with AIRS to DPS by contacting the AIRS POC. The POC will be responsible for ensuring effective resolution to all reported problems.
    - Report unresolved gateway problems directly to the SIEC(?). The SIEC will ensure effective resolution to all reported AIRS problems.

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## Other items to include in an SOP?

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- Regional assignment maps
- Glossary
- Miniature “field guide” for users...pocket or wallet sized?
- Training requirements?
- Other ideas?

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## Next Steps

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- Finalize the SOP
- Usage
  - Tracking current usage
  - Promoting future usage
  - Incorporating AIRS into future exercises and planned events
- Memoranda of Understanding
  - Additional MOUs for agencies, as desired
- AIRS Training
  - Short, simple briefing delivered;
    - In person
    - Via the web
    - By a video

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**Questions?**

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